



COMPACT FLUORESCENT LIGHT BULBS

Frequently Asked Questions

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Why would I want to use compact fluorescent light bulbs?

Replacing incandescent bulbs for compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) is one way for Virginians to reduce their energy consumption, reduce pollution, and save money. CFLs use 75% less energy than the standard incandescent light bulbs, and last up to 10 times longer (up to 10,000 hours compared to the 1,000 hour incandescent). CFLs also produce about 70% less heat than their incandescent counterparts, which can result in lower energy costs related to home cooling needs.

Aren't there mercury issues related to using CFLs?

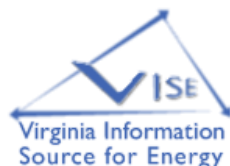
CFLs are safe to use in your home. No mercury is released when the bulbs are in use and they pose no danger to you or your family when used properly. CFLs do, however, contain approximately 5 mg of mercury (the amount equivalent to the tip of a pen), and thus should be managed responsibly when they burn out.

CFLs actually present an opportunity to prevent mercury emissions from entering the environment by reducing the demand for electricity generated by coal-fired power plants. Coal-fired power plants are the primary man-made source for mercury in the environment, accounting for approximately 40% of the mercury emissions in the U.S. Additionally, the reduction in power generation demand reduces the production of other air pollutants which cause smog and are linked to global climate change.

How do I get rid of CFLs?

Find out how to manage the burnt out CFL appropriately where you live:

1. Check directly with your local waste management agency on the recycling options and disposal guidelines in your community: www.deq.virginia.gov/recycle/contactlist.html
2. If your community has a household hazardous waste (HHW) drop off center or offers HHW collection events, check to see if they accept CFLs (many do!) Check www.deq.virginia.gov/info/lightbulbs.html for HHW information and contacts.
3. You can purchase boxes online or in retail stores and mail your used CFLs to be recycled. Check www.deq.virginia.gov/info/lightbulbs.html for information on how to order a box.
4. If recycling of the CFL bulbs is not an option where you live, simply place the CFL in a plastic bag and seal it before putting it in your trash. However, you should not dispose of CFLs or any mercury-containing device in your trash if it is destined for a waste incinerator as this increases the risk of mercury emissions to the environment. Ask your local waste management agency for specific guidance in this situation.



What do I do if a CFL breaks?

CFLs contain a small amount of mercury sealed within the bulb's glass tubing. If your bulb breaks you can minimize any risks by following these clean-up and disposal recommendations from EPA:

Before Clean-up: Ventilate the Room

1. Have people and pets leave the room, and don't let anyone walk through the breakage area.
2. Open a window and leave the room for 15 minutes or more.
3. Shut off the central forced-air heating/air conditioning system, if you have one.

Clean-up Steps for Hard Surfaces	OR	Clean-up Steps for Carpeting or Rug
4. Carefully scoop up glass fragments and powder using stiff paper or cardboard and place them in a glass jar with metal lid (such as a canning jar) or in a sealed plastic bag.		4. Carefully pick up glass fragments and place them in a glass jar with metal lid (such as a canning jar) or in a sealed plastic bag.
5. Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder.		5. Use sticky tape, such as duct tape, to pick up any remaining small glass fragments and powder.
6. Wipe the area clean with damp paper towels or disposable wet wipes and place them in the glass jar or plastic bag.		6. If vacuuming is needed after all visible materials are removed, vacuum the area where the bulb was broken.
7. Do not use a vacuum or broom to clean up the broken bulb on hard surfaces.		7. Remove the vacuum bag (or empty and wipe the canister), and put the bag or vacuum debris in a sealed plastic bag.

Disposal of Clean-up Materials

8. Immediately place all cleanup materials outside the building in a trash container or outdoor protected area for the next normal trash pickup.
9. Wash your hands after disposing of the jars or plastic bags containing clean-up materials.
10. In most Virginia localities, all cleanup materials (sealed in the bag or jar) can be disposed with the normal trash. However, if your trash is destined for a waste incinerator, ask your local waste management agency for specific guidance. See page 1 for contact information.

Future Cleaning of Carpeting or Rug: Ventilate the Room During and After Vacuuming

11. The next several times you vacuum, shut off the central forced-air heating/air conditioning system and open a window prior to vacuuming.
12. Keep the central heating/air conditioning system shut off and the window open for at least 15 minutes after vacuuming is completed.

Additional information: www.deq.virginia.gov/info/lightbulbs.html

Please direct any questions on the proper management of fluorescent bulbs and other mercury-containing devices to:

Christine Arcari, Virginia DEQ's Universal Waste Coordinator, at (804) 698-4219.

Steve Coe, Virginia DEQ's Manager of Recycling and Litter Prevention, at (804) 698-4029